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EXPRESS ADS

PASSENGER TRAINS of Canada, North American commuter trains and streetcars are among the new subjects added to Northwest Rail Images' line of color slide sets. Two Canadian sets featuring CN, CP, ONR, GO, ACR, NAR, PGE and E&N now join our three U.S. "Before Amtrak" sets. Other non-passenger sets available, too. Send an SSE for a revised list of 14 sets, or 25¢ for list and sample, to Northwest Rail Images, 4891 Donald Street, Eugene, Oregon 97405.

DISCOVER AMTRAK! Our informed staff will be pleased to assist you with trip planning, reservations and tickets. Write GREAT WESTERN TOURS, Sheraton-Palace Hotel, 639 Market St., San Francisco 94105, or call us at 398-2994. "An AMTRAK appointed agency dedicated to the pleasure of travel by train."

WANTED: ATSF, UP, AND SP COACH AND PULLMAN KEYS. LOCOMOTIVE SPOTTERS GUIDE, LATE ISSUE OF PULLMAN DESCRIPTIVE LIST OF CARS, ALSO U.P. CHINA AND GLASSWARE. SEND PRICES AND DETAILS TO: MARK WEINBERGER, P.O. BOX 6810, LA JOLLA, CA 92037.

WANTED: Old Railroad Public and Emply. timetables--steam and trolley--especially those dated before 1935--also annual passes from abandoned railroads in Colorado, Nevada and California, out-of-print railroad books, named train booklets or folders, railroad playing card decks, etc. Will buy one item or whole collection. D. C. Wornom, 1214 North LaSalle Street, Chicago, IL 60610.

CHESAPEAKE & OHIO HISTORICAL NEWSLETTER is published monthly and contains material of interest to all C&O fans. 16 pages average, 8½x11, glossy photos every month as well as special issues with diagrams, drawings, etc. Historical material, current news, and model sections in each issue. Up to date treatment of C&O/AMTRAK operations and much history of C&O passenger services. $4.25 per year. Sample copy free. C&O Newsletter, P.O. Box 417, Alderson, W.Va. 24910.

NORTH SHORE LINE system timetable reproduction April 30, 1922, sixteen pages including a centerfold map, advertising for the connections of the "Eastern Limited," and a cover with car 406 signed for the "Eastern Limited." Price $1.25. Herb Danneman, 14425 Woodland Place, Brookfield, WI 53005.

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT WITH COLORFUL BUMPER STICKERS. Easy-off vinyl featuring Turbo and slogan "Avoid Strain - Take a TRAIN." Send one dollar and 16¢ SASE for six. Gene Ransom, 2102 Burns Lane, Camden, SC 29020.

North American Passenger Train Services...Helping make the trains worth traveling again...Membership in Naptras costs just $4.50 a year and includes a year's subscription to NAPTRAKER, our official newsletter. For information or membership write: Naptras, 621 W. Willow, Lombard, IL 60148.

"ECOLOGY EXPRESS" (environmental-education tour of Schuykill Valley), Philadelphia-Pottsville via Reading RDC. Saturday, May 5, 1973. DELTRAN, P.O. Box 429, Bryn Mawr, PA 19010.

RAIL TRAVEL newsletter

25¢

VOL. 3 NO. 3
FIRST ISSUE OF
FEBRUARY 1973
#53

IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT OUR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE

Beginning with this issue of RTN we are changing the dating of each issue to conform with the realities of our publication schedule. This issue, which would have been called the Feb. 5 issue under our old system, is labelled the "First issue of February." The next issue to appear this month will be the "Second issue of February" and so on each month. We have never actually published RTN on the first and third Mondays since its inception, and the dates have proven arbitrary and confusing. Rather, we maintain a flexible publication schedule, sometimes holding an issue up when an important story is about to break. When we are behind schedule it falsely appears as if we are extremely fast in reportage, e.g., if an event that occurred Jan. 15 is reported in the Jan. 15 issue. Newsstand sales suffer also when the cover date appears old. Thus we hope the new dating will erase confusion for all of us. We will continue to indicate in each twice-monthly issue the actual projected date of mailing, for you who like to keep tabs on your mail delivery. The last issue of RTN (Jan. 15 issue) was mailed from here on February 2.

ADVERTISING RATES FOR RAIL TRAVEL NEWSLETTER: Express ads (80 characters and spaces per line)--up to 3 lines for $1.00 (minimum); additional lines 35¢ each, 3 for $1.00. Count your typewriter spaces to guage line length and send your ad copy with remittance to Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. Display ads: full page $10, half page $6, quarter page $3.50 for camera-ready copy. Write to same address.

SUBSCRIBE TO THIS NEWSLETTER. Only six dollars per year for 24 issues. Back copies 25¢ each (see complete list of those available in the Dec. 4, 1972 issue). We are extending our offer on the first six issues of RTN for only $1--good for orders postmarked before April 1, 1973. (Ask for the "First Six Issues Pack.") Address: Message Media, Dept. RTN, P.O. Box 9007, Berkeley, California 94709.

LETTERS

Regarding the recent mailing of RTN double bonanza issues: Big November issue arrived Miami on Jan. 14. Big December issue arrived Miami on Jan. 15. Yes, there is a difference between First and Third Class Mail enroute, at least into Florida and especially at a time when the Postal Boobs are figuring every possible way to cut back. Your timely and highly popular publication deserves the First Class route ALL THE TIME!

George W. Gerhart

Miami, Florida

Your December double issue arrived today (Jan. 15) and I couldn't put it down until I had read all of it. Sure do like the articles Paul Rayton writes: his travels in Canada as reported in that issue were of great interest to me even though I have never traveled there by train.

Also liked the article on Greyhound's opposition to Amtrak. Why hasn't Trailways complained? My wife and I and her grandmother just completed a round trip Alexandria to Miami by SILVER METEOR and VACATIONER. Sure would have hated that trip by bus.

Keep the good news (and, unfortunately the bad) coming.

Adron F. Hall

Alexandria, Virginia

I enjoyed the Canadian travel article by Paul Rayton in the 2nd double issue. In September, while westbound on CN #1, a French-Canadian woman in her 50's told me at lunch that she wanted to go to B.C. on the CANADIAN but was told in Montreal on the phone that it ran only three times per week! CP is doing now what SP did to the SHASTA DAYLIGHT in 1959. Also, with each successive time change, CN is arriving in Vancouver one hour later, and leaving one hour earlier, now missing the express buses to and from Seattle. CN's SUPER CONTINENTAL service has been lengthened about 9 hrs in 10 years. In summer, 1971 the lengthening west of Edmonton was advertised as "necessary to install CTC" and was never shortened afterwards. During Christmas, CP #2 in B.C. was two sleepers plus the sleeper-observation-dome. Pretty short for the winter run. Canadians are so docile; they don't know or don't care about this.

Glenn Lee

Seattle, Washington

Some comments on Paul Rayton's Canadian travelogue: First, the Quebec-Levis auto ferry is not operated by CN but by the Province of Quebec. I am surprised by Mr. Rayton's finding the CANADIAN lightly patronized. I saw the train several times this summer and found it well-patronized. In fact, in March we made reservations for a Toronto-Winnipeg trip in July and we got the last bedrooms on the train! With a train losing $20 million a year and summer demand like that, why shouldn't there be a 50% surcharge for bedrooms, compartments and drawing rooms?

Mr. Rayton says CP's Skyline dome cars were created from former dome coaches. Not true. They were built in 1954-55 as "Dome Coffee Shop Coaches." The Skyline Coffee Shop was at one end and the other end contained 26 legrest coach seats. About 1960 the coach seats in some of the cars were removed and replaced with tables in order to provide a full meal car for the DOMINION, which was losing its dining cars in the winter season. This past summer I saw both types of cars on the CANADIAN, so not all the cars were converted. By the way, these cars were very similar to the dome cars built for the AMERICAN ROYAL ZEPHYR the year before the CANADIAN was built.

One last comment. You carry a report that Amtrak has purchased the 5 remaining "Mountain" series observation cars from BN. I find this hard to believe. Only two of the cars are serviceable. The other three are stored at St. Paul in very poor shape. Also, a well-placed source in the BN says BN President Downing has put a hold on one of the "Mountain" cars for BN use.

Thomas Kopriva

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Just a note to let you know how much I enjoy your periodical. It beats all the rest because the news is so fresh.

I've traveled most of the Amtrak routes repeatedly and deficiencies noted by RTN stories were true when I rode. So they weren't just isolated instances but daily errors.

Marvin L. Doudna

Miami, Florida

Rail Travel Newsletter, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Whole No. 53), First Issue of February, 1973. Published twice monthly by Message Media, P.O. Box 9007, Berkeley, California 94709. Subscription $6.00 per year; single copy 25¢. STAFF: James Russell, Editor; Paul Rayton, Editor-at-Large; Doug Ellis, Staff Photographer.

EDITORIAL

LET'S GET THIS SHOW ON THE ROAD

Now that President Nixon's budget has been fully revealed, we feel a good deal of sympathy with his desire to reduce the Federal bureaucracy and try to make the government perform its needed social functions more efficiently. By and large the cuts proposed in the budget seem sensibly done, with a good deal of care in balancing off the needs of the various Federal agencies.

However, the cutting of Amtrak's $128 million request down to only $93 million does not seem to be in the best interests of the nation. It's not certain that people in Washington, with a thousand other matters to be concerned with, are clearly aware of the great transportation crisis that this nation is facing--in fact, enduring. Figures just released by the National Safety Council--its yearly preliminary estimate which proves very close to final tallies--reveal that highway deaths in 1972 shot up by 2,000--to a total of 56,700, or a rise of almost four per cent, for those who like to think in those relative terms. This increasing highway massacre represents significant figures in anybody's book, and is an absolutely outrageous and totally unacceptable situation for the travelers of this nation to be forced to endure.

We'll have more to say about the highway situation another time. Right now we must express our shock and amazement that the Federal government can blithely cut back on funds that have some positive, direct chance of reducing transportation deaths by providing citizens with an alternative to air and asphalt. And Amtrak is a party to this situation by its lack of vigor and self-assertion, by agreeing to make do with what the Budget Office decides is adequate without making the pressing case that it should.

Since the present Administration likes to justify everything in business terms, it should be noted that Amtrak is quite justifiable along these lines. Amtrak does operate under the profit motive, and does so without waste. It provides jobs within the free enterprise system for travel agents, tour leaders, resort owners, and many others, not to mention all the personnel engaged directly in running and staffing the trains. Even motel owners long ago decided that Amtrak was a good thing, since anything that increases tourism helps their business. With the recent devaluation of the dollar, it will be possible for increasing numbers of visitors from other nations to become tourists in America. They should be able to ride good trains just as they do at home, and see America at its best. The balance of trade deficit will be helped by increasing tourism in this country.

There are numerous reasons why Amtrak should be given more money to really get its show on the road--if you'll pardon a perhaps inappropriate metaphor. We can't go into all of them in this space, such as the fuel shortage and its further effect on international trade when we must get a third of our oil from abroad. Trains are extremely efficient fuel-wise, as you know.

We are not calling for the Federal government to pour vast sums of money down a black hole. We are asking for just a relatively little more so that Amtrak won't be set back at this crucial point. All the money we're asking for isn't worth the life of one citizen unmercifully killed on our roads. Ninety per cent of all recreational travel is done by automobile. It's time to work for a really balanced transportation system, and that can't be done by drawing back now.

THE FIRST INTER-AMERICAN RUNS

The INTER-AMERICAN, Amtrak's promised train to Mexico, got underway right on schedule Jan. 27, running from Fort Worth to Laredo, Texas (see Amtrak route map on cover) to make a bus connection across the border to the National Railways of Mexico's AZTEC EAGLE.

There was quite a bit of celebrating in Texas as the first train ran--13 cars, most in Amtrak paint. This was so even though the train is but a shadow of the service that was expected before the Office of Management and Budget decided to hold back the extra funds needed to begin a more extensive service. But Amtrak officials told the San Antonio Express/News during the inaugural ceremonies in that city that "on the horizon" are direct sleeping car service from Chicago without stopovers, direct across-the-border service, and a new station in southwest San Antonio. At the end of April, when advanced-standard-time schedules are put out, Amtrak will attempt to align schedules with the TEXAS CHIEF more closely to reduce the long layover required at Ft. Worth for passengers from the North. There was apparently no mention of the hoped-for new train from St. Louis to Laredo via Little Rock. Because of the short run of the train, one wag quipped that it should be named the INTRA-TEXAN instead of the INTER-AMERICAN.

But Texans were for the moment happy over the historic occasion. Because of the crowds of well-wishers and ceremonies along the way, the first arrival at Laredo was at 6:25pm, 1hr 20mins late. That's the time the AZTEC EAGLE departs from Nuevo Laredo (note misspelling on Amtrak's route map), but N de M held the Mexican train for the occasion. Train 21 was carrying 124 passengers out of Ft. Worth, about half of them revenue passengers. On board the first run was Representative J.J. Pickle of Austin, one of the prime movers in getting the new train running. The Ft. Worth Star-Telegram reported that he went to the news media lounge car, whipped out his harmonica, and played "I've Been Working on the Railroad" as cameras clicked & whirred. Amtrak had a fashion show going at major stops, accompanied by a Mariachi band. We hope to present a first-hand account of the first run in the next issue of RTN.

AMTRAK'S NEXT NATIONWIDE TIMETABLE

Amtrak's next nationwide timetable will appear April 29, the changeover date to Advanced Standard Time. Among the changes to be expected are the addition of Martinez, Calif., as a stop for the COAST STARLIGHT and the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR. Truckee, Calif., near Lake Tahoe's ski and vacation resorts, will also be reinstated as a SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR stop. RTN has long advocated this change.

The FLORIDIAN is expected to return to a 2 nights-1 day schedule between Chicago and Florida instead of its present 2 days-1 night.

Already in effect (as of Jan. 8) is a fare increase on the SUPER CHIEF. Santa Fe's old Flexi-Fare plan was dropped, whereby coach fare was charged plus sleeping accommodation. However, the extra $7.50 service charge for the train is also eliminated. These changes are to equalize first class fares over different routes. (The same change applies to the TEXAS CHIEF.)

Baggage handling changes went into effect Feb. 1. Baggage checking service charges were eliminated, and a uniform policy adopted of 3 pieces of free checked baggage per adult, 2 per child, 5 per family plan ticket. Excess weight charges will be based on coach instead of first class fares.

THE PENN CENTRAL IS CLOSED BY A STRIKE

The United Transportation Union struck PC at 12:01am February 8, idling 28,000 workers in 16 states and closing a major portion of the Amtrak system. Congress quickly passed legislation postponing the strike until May 9, and the railroad was running again the next day. Amtrak was prepared for the strike, its goal being to leave no passenger stranded. Both BROADWAY LIMITEDS were held at Pittsburgh Feb. 7 and passengers bused to destinations. The northbound SILVER STAR was the first affected; passengers were placed on either the MONTREALER or a Metroliner north of Washington to avoid stranding the equipment in that city. All Florida trains were to run only south of Washington. The WASHINGTONIAN was annulled, while the MONTREALER was expected to make it thru to Springfield, Mass. The MERCHANTS LTD, due to arrive Washington at 1:30am was expected to do so, even though the strike would be on. The NIGHT OWL was annulled. The northbound FLORIDIAN was expected to arrive at Chicago, but the southbound train of Feb. 8 was cancelled. The GEORGE WASHINGTON heading for Chicago was to terminate at Newport, Kentucky. All Florida passengers would be bused in the segment north of Washington. Washington-Cincinnati travelers were to be bused as well as those between Louisville and Chicago. The NATIONAL LIMITED ran only from Kansas City to St. Louis the day before the strike.

GOVERNMENT TAKEOVER OF EASTERN RAILROADS PROPOSED

On Feb. 10 the Senate Commerce Committee issued a voluminous report recommending that a Federally-controlled authority take over the eight Eastern railroads, including the Penn Central, which are now in bankruptcy. This would be in essence a temporary nationalization of the roads. This move would be preferable, explained Sen. Vance Hartke, to subsidizing the roads with no "government overview" to protect the taxpayer's interest. The proposed Northeast Transportation Authority would have the power to upgrade the track and signal systems of the roads and charge a user fee to the railroads utilizing the trackage.

As a means of prodding the government into action, the Penn Central, shortly after the report was issued, petitioned the court that is overseeing its bankruptcy for permission to abandon its commuter train services between Baltimore and Washington, New Jersey and Philadelphia, Detroit and Ann Arbor, and Chicago and Valparaiso, Indiana. In addition, PC asked permission to suspend its Amtrak operations by September 1 unless Amtrak pays its more for its services. The railroad said it lost $54.7 million on commuter runs and $32.5 million on the services it performs for Amtrak. The road did not ask to drop commuter services on its Hudson-Harlem and west-end New Haven lines, as these provide an adequate monetary return. Finally, the railroad asked to be allowed to abandon 5,000 miles of track in order to save $20 million per year.

In the meantime, Congress, in halting the UTU strike against PC, also required the Dept. of Transportation to come up with a plan by March 26 for saving essential rail service in the Northeast. Editorialized the N.Y. Times (Feb. 14), this would require the formation of an agency such as the proposed Northeast Transportation Authority.

AMTRAK WILL SEEK TO RETAIN ALL ITS PRESENT ROUTES

Amtrak has indicated that its plan for passenger service beyond next July 1 will not include dropping any present routes. Instead it may reclassify some as "experimental," making it easier to drop them in the future if necessary. In any case, if routes were to be proposed for discontinuance July 1, ICC hearings would have to be held, thus delaying the actual closures.

AMTRAK'S FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

Amtrak issued its first annual report to the President and Congress February 1, covering the calendar year 1972. The main body of the report consists of about 50 typed pages, and an equal number form an appendix that presents findings of the Lou Harris poll described earlier in RTN.

In his opening statement, Amtrak President Roger Lewis refers first to the "better cars and cleaner cars" than the corporation was operating a year earlier, but says "we still have a long way to go to achieve what we consider an excellent service." Next, timekeeping is mentioned, and the overall 75% performance for the year is called "not satisfactory to us."

The Lou Harris report is mentioned, and an in-depth study of the economic and social costs of various travel modes is alluded to. In addition, Lewis referred to an in-depth study of total ridership by all modes on individual segments of Amtrak's present routes. From this, Amtrak had constructed a 3-variable computer

model that used speed, frequency and price to assess the probable number of passengers that would be diverted to trains as a result of changes in any of the three variables. Amtrak is using these two studies to prepare its legislative program for fiscal year 1974, said Lewis.

Next mentioned were the Turbo acquisitions for the two Chicago corridors. As of the end of 1972, Amtrak's rolling stock consisted of 1765 cars, including self-propelled cars, and 407 engines. Not all of these are owned by Amtrak. Of the cars it owns, 483 had refurbishing completed by Dec. 31 and 410 are scheduled for "intermediate or heavy overhaul" by next June 30. Thirty locomotives have been overhauled and 40 more will be by June 30. (An article by Don Phillips in the March Trains Magazine details Amtrak's locomotive purchase from General Motors: 40 new "SDP40F" units are being built, to be placed on the three Santa Fe routes, with the first to be delivered by July 6.)

Revenues are mentioned next: for calendar year 1972 income amounted to $162.6 million, expenses $310 million, and net loss $147.5 million. For the first six months of fiscal year 1973 (July-Dec. 1972) revenues were $88 million, expenses $151 million, and net loss $63 million. Summing this up, Lewis said, "The revenue increases for the first six months of fiscal year 1973 are running slightly less than the increases projected prior to the beginning of the fiscal year, and expenses for the six months are running slightly higher than estimated. This could adversely affect our estimates of operating results for the full fiscal year." This somewhat ominous-sounding statement was immediately picked up by the press as a warning that Amtrak's surprising upswing in revenues should not be taken over-optimistically.

Lewis ended his preface by noting that as of last June 1 the 4% payments to the railroads for liability were ended and "a new contract provision became effective which more accurately reflects the cost of casualty liability and should result in savings to the Corporation."

In the main body of the Annual Report, an interesting and important table breaks down Amtrak's $147.5 million deficit by route. On corridor runs, Amtrak lost $17.1 million, the largest portion, $7 million, on the Northeast Corridor. Next biggest loss was N.Y.-Buffalo, $3 million. The state-assisted Chicago-Quincy route showed a paper profit of $200,000, and the two smallest deficits were Chicago-St. Louis ($300,-000) and L.A.-San Diego ($500,000). Chicago corridors to Cincinnati, Detroit and Milwaukee each lost between one and two million dollars. Chicago-Carbondale lost $600,-000 and Seattle-Portland $900,000.

On long-distance routes, the New York-Florida runs and the Chicago-L.A. train were tied for greatest absolute dollar losses--$7.9 million. Chicago-Seattle (EMPIRE BUILDER) lost $7 million. Lowest absolute losses were on the PANAMA LTD ($1.2 million)

Amtrak

National Railroad Passenger Corporation

and the Seattle-San Diego route ($1.7 million). Going up the deficit scale, the Cincinnati-Washington & Newport News portion of the GEORGE WASHINGTON/RILEY lost $2.1 million, the SUNSET $2.3 million, the FLORIDIAN $3.4 million, the BROADWAY $3.8 million, the TEXAS CHIEF $4.1 million, the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR/DENVER ZEPHYR $4.3 million, and the NATIONAL LIMITED $5.3 million.

In the "experimental service" classification, the POTOMAC SPECIAL lost $1 million and the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA $2.6 million. A total of $600,000 deficit was related to international services (both started late in the year). The Montreal service lost $500,000 and the rest was a deficit on the train to Vancouver. On special trains the corporation lost $1.8 million.

The above figures are those solely related to routes. The remainder of Amtrak's total deficits was accounted for by terminal and other facility costs ($32.3 million) and railroad and general and administrative expenses ($41.1 million).

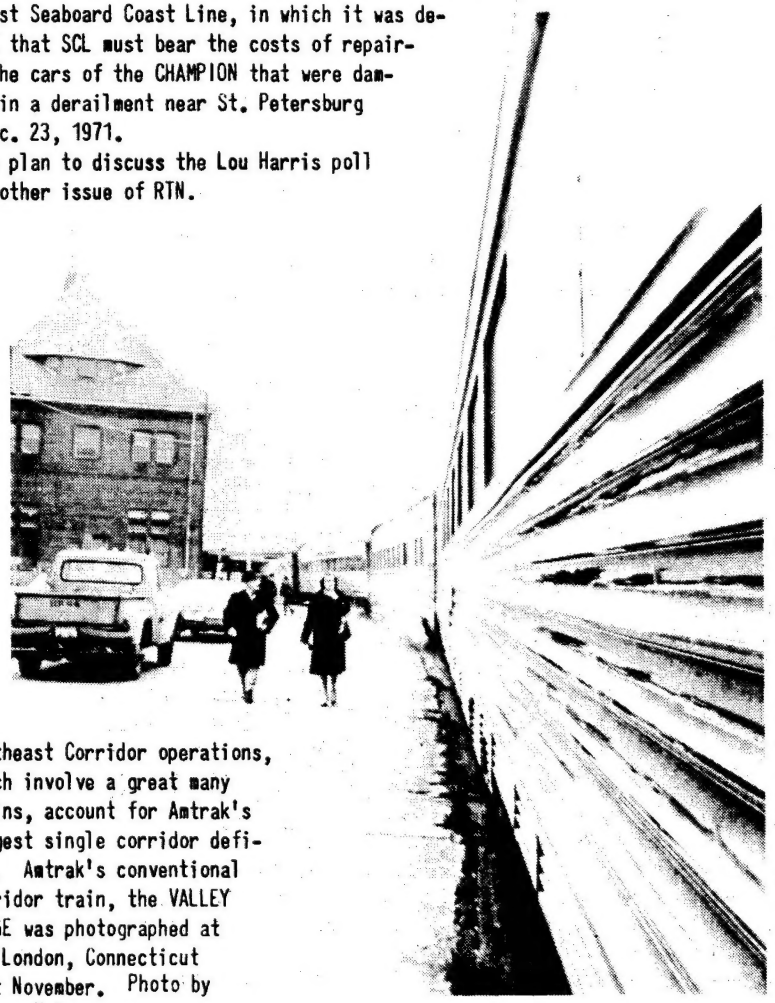
On-time performance tables were presented in the report (see a representative table in our last issue). A summary table of total passengers for the 5 months ended September 30, 1971 and 1972 was printed. In the 1972 comparison period coach ridership increased 9.5%, sleeper and parlor ridership went up 11.9%, and the total increase was 10.4%.

In the section on Marketing, Amtrak briefly summarized its promotional efforts (274 newspaper ad insertions were made last summer), its credit card promotion ($9 million of income was via credit card in 1972), its travel agent program, its tours, the "Free Wheels" service, its new ticket form, its ticket office consolidation, its planned reservation and ticketing system of the future, its on-board passenger services, food and beverage service, mail, baggage and express service, training of employees (1200 of them in 1972), simplification of tariffs, and the direct takeover of employee functions by Amtrak (as required by an amendment to the Amtrak Act).

Amtrak analyzed its mail received between Feb. 7 and Dec. 29 of last year and found that of 8084 letters received about 59% was critical. In about 15% of letters praise and criticism were balanced, and 26% were mostly favorable. The greatest consumer complaint between August and December was the combination of reservations, duplicate reservations and ticketing, accounting for 16% of all gripes. Rude personnel was the next most numerous complaint, 11.1% of the total, while air conditioning and heating problems elicited 10.6% and lateness of trains 10%. Cleanliness was named in 9.5% of complaints, and mechanical condition of cars in 9.4%. Surprisingly, roadbeds were near the bottom of the list, only 1.2% of complaints being directed at them.

One of the largest sections of the report concerns legal proceedings in which Amtrak has been involved. A few interesting examples of case summaries are given here: Amtrak on Oct. 26 asked a U.S. District Court to compell Southern Pacific to operate auto-carrying cars with Amtrak passenger trains; Burlington Northern is seeking a declaration that they need not operate trains for Amtrak outside the U.S. (to Vancouver); neither case has been decided yet. One case that has been decided by the National Arbitration Panel is that brought by Amtrak against Seaboard Coast Line, in which it was decided that SCL must bear the costs of repairing the cars of the CHAMPION that were damaged in a derailment near St. Petersburg on Dec. 23, 1971.

We plan to discuss the Lou Harris poll in another issue of RTN.



Northeast Corridor operations, which involve a great many trains, account for Amtrak's biggest single corridor deficit. Amtrak's conventional corridor train, the VALLEY FORGE was photographed at New London, Connecticut last November. Photo by George Hyko.

SANTA RIDES A TURBO

St. Nicholas knows the fast, safe way to get around the Northeast Corridor. And crowds were on hand to greet him at Old Saybrook, Connecticut, this past Christmas season. We lost the name of the reader who kindly sent us this photo.

NORTHEAST CORRIDOR SIGHTINGS --Kenneth Maylath

Washington Union Station, Jan. 27. The WASHINGTONIAN actually arrived on time. That is, the whole train, including the Montreal cars, not a separate section out of New York because of the Montreal run being so late. It had 2 sleepers (1 UP, 1 Amtrak), diner, refurbished coach, lounge, and 5 assorted PC coaches. The VACATIONER eased in northbound 2hr 40min late with about 50 detraining. The GEORGE WASHINGTON was 5min late at 12:50, with all of 25 getting off its 3 cars. The 12:30 Metro didn't get in until 12:50, no exact count but something over 100 detraining. The 1:05 departure of the MERCHANTS LIMITED consisted of 6 or 7 cars, 4 of them refurbished--a rather high percentage of refurbished equipment for the strictly N.E. Corridor run. The CONNECTICUT YANKEE was in at 2:05, 10min late, with 125 getting off. The SILVER STAR was a few minutes behind it, also 10min late, with 40 getting out. It was about 20min late before they could change the power and get it out of there. The Southern "mixed" from Lynchburg was in 10min early, discharging 6 passengers. The 2:29 Metroliner was posted on time, but didn't show up until 8min late. 115 passengers got off. Returning to Baltimore on the 3:05 SENATOR departure, I had an on-time departure, arrived Baltimore on time with the usual assortment of PC coaches and a good number of passengers. Just after its arrival in Baltimore, the PATRIOT arrived on time across the platform. It does seem that overall timekeeping in this area has moved to the better following the holiday period, which would be expected.

For the period Jan. 22-Feb. 16 there were some temporary adjustments of the Washington-Harrisburg service. The Monday and Wednesday NATIONAL LIMITED (not Friday's) was replaced by a bus, and the BROADWAY ran Monday thru Thursday via Philadelphia. The reason was track work (including installation of welded rail, it is said) on the lines between Perryville, MD and Harrisburg, along the Susquehanna River.

SOME PROBLEMS ON THE SUNSET LIMITED

The three engines of the westbound SUNSET LIMITED derailed at 13th & Austin in San Antonio early on Feb. 8, after a flatcar of a freight on an adjoining track jack-knifed in front of the passenger train. The engines, SP cab unit, UP "B" unit, and UP cab unit, went down an embankment and stopped inches from a house, but did not overturn. No one was injured on the train, described as "full." In order to proceed, one engine from the eastbound train was combined with the third UP unit, and each train continued with two engines. The spectacular accident made front-page photos in Texas newspapers.

A trestle fire on Feb. 12 resulted in the detouring of both SUNSETS between Sanderson and Rosenberg, Texas, missing Del Rio and San Antonio. The trains used Texas & Pacific tracks Sanderson-Sweetwater and Santa Fe Sweetwater-Rosenberg. Involved were train #1 leaving New Orleans Feb. 12 and #2 leaving Los Angeles Feb. 11.

Urban-Suburban Transit

A new note has been injected into Southern California's confused rail transit plans by Jess Unruh, who is running for Mayor of Los Angeles. He said Feb. 12 that if elected he would support a monorail or dual-rail train system built over existing freeways..... Amtrak Jan. 15 ordered local Washington-Baltimore passengers not to use the BROADWAY LIMITED. Thus a hassle continues which goes back a good many months. Commuters have been left up in the air over Amtrak schedule changes, and have organized to make themselves heard, including an effort that's meeting with some success to get the state of Maryland involved in improving Baltimore-D.C. commuter service. The Baltimore-Washington Commuters Ass'n is trying to get a restraining order against Amtrak. Amtrak, meanwhile, has advised commuters to take the MONTREALER instead, which leaves Washington at 5:05pm..... England's aerospace Minister announced Feb. 14 that his country's experiments with a Hovertrain, designed to run up to 300mph on elevated track, are being abandoned. About $12million have been spent on the project..... Freeways are still being fought in the San Francisco area. A Sierra Club man spoke to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission Feb. 14, urging that body to speak out "loud and clear" against automobiles and freeways. He called the Commission's present regional plan too conservative a document and asked that basic policy give the auto lowest priority..... The Milwaukee Road has asked the Illinois Commerce Commission for a 10% commuter fare increase as of March 1..... The PATH (Port Authority Trans-Hudson System) in New Jersey and New York is planned to more than double its 14-mile length in the next five years and become a full-fledged commuter line, says the N.Y. Times in a long article (Jan. 15). It was once to be merely a shuttle trolley under the Hudson River..... Satirical columnist Art Buchwald Jan. 28 suggested that commuter lines fail because riders can't fulfill the work ethic while riding them and "doing nothing." This could be solved by having riders assemble such products as TV sets while they travel, making a commuter line the longest assembly line in the world..... Yet another "probe" of BART appeared in San Francisco's "alternative" newspaper, the Bay Guardian Feb. 14. The paper calls the system "Steve Bechtel's $2 billion toy." (Steve Bechtel is president of Bechtel Corp., a major BART contractor..... A Boston subway fire Feb. 6 killed one man and hospitalized 94 others, all from smoke inhalation. Passengers had to exit thru a dark tunnel after a cracked insulating blockon the third rail power pickup shoe of a 10-year old car short-circuited. Similar cars are now out of service for replacement of the offending part.....

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Amtrak has reversed the decline in the number of railroad passengers but the question of Amtrak's failure to get all equipment in proper shape for the 1972 summer rush has turned off a lot of people who did ride the trains won't be answered until the summer of 1973. This would be assuming that Amtrak gets past the July 1 deadline without being ambushed by its enemies. Given a 'green light' in mid-1973 plus adequate funding for new equipment and better track there is no reason why 'making the trains worth riding again' won't succeed."

--Cleland B. Wyllie in Michigan Business Review, Jan.

"If the passenger trains don't make a comeback, it will be another proof of man's irrationality--at least where hot cars and fast planes are concerned."

--Washington Evening Star & Daily News editorial, Jan. 29

"In the continental United States, only three states are not served by Amtrak. Arkansas is one of them... To get Arkansas and Amtrak together, the President needs a new train of thought. Help yourself. And help Arkansas. Write the President in care of your Congressman. AND KEEP PROGRESS ON THE RIGHT TRACK."

--NARP and Arkansas supporters' ad in Arkansas Gazette, Jan. 28

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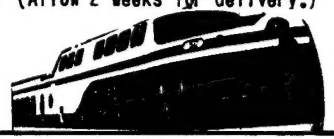

Mixed Train of Thoughts

AMTRAK IS ABOUT to make one of its biggest mistakes. It is said that the corporation is preparing to unveil an across-the-board 10% system-wide fare increase to take effect April 29. Just the wrong thing to do at this point! And, ironically, just as TWA is asking for a 46% airline fare reduction for transcontinental travel. If Amtrak expects to make up deficits that way, it's dead wrong. Previous fare reductions increased ridership enormously, and Amtrak has stated that its main push must be to fill up its trains. We're betting that the "historical decline" in rail travel will recommence if train travelers are subjected to such a further outrage. (Is this idea a product of Amtrak's 3-variable computer model of patronage?--see the article starting on p. 7. If so, we'd suggest adding a few more variables.)

* * *

AMTRAK NOW HAS its own "Amtrak Service Bulletin," a newsletter to Amtrak service personnel. The first issue appeared Jan. 16..... YOU MAY HAVE seen classified ads in Washington newspapers Jan. 26 asking for "40 energetic people" to perform all on-board services on the MONTREALER & WASHINGTONIAN. Amtrak is hiring its own people to replace the PC crews whom that railroad agreed to supply until Feb. 15 or thereabouts to staff the whole train even though it ran mostly on non-PC tracks. A "Train Service Supervisor" will be in charge of each train's service crew. The workers will be free to unionize themselves as they see fit..... AMTRAK IS SELLING 5 different scenic posters: for the Southwest, East, Northwest, Florida, and one picturing a Metroliner. The color posters cost $1.25 or $5 for all five. Write Amtrak Advertising Dept., Attn: Mr. Peter Maroney, 955 L'Enfant Plaza North, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20024. Tell 'em RTN sent you..... WE JUST SPOTTED one of those colorful "Avoid Strain - Take A Train" bumperstrips being offered at cost by the maker (see Express Ads on page 16). They have a nice Turbo picture on them.....

* * *

SAN CLEMENTE, CALIFORNIA may try to revive the idea of moving the Santa Fe tracks off the scenic beach area. The ploy this time is that the present undercrossing of the tracks doesn't have a ramp for handicapped pedestrians, and state law requires one. Best plan: keep the undercrossing, install automatic gates so train speed restrictions can be lifted, and the tracks will keep out unwanted honky-tonk development and prove a boon to travelers as well. After all, points out Robert J. Swan, the Amtrak law was signed above the tracks in San Clemente!..... WORKING LIKE MAD to get Amtrak's $9.1 million released from the clutches of OMB so service thru Arkansas can begin is John A. Mills of Little Rock, who on Jan. 26 held a news conference there with all 3 TV stations, 4 radio stations, and both daily papers. What better reason for promoting Amtrak?--it's not a faceless bureaucracy, but an organization that citizens get involved with, stimulating the best in the touted American energy and freedom of enterprise..... GOVERNOR RONNIE REAGAN of California just the other day in a speech at St. Mary's College, California, mentioned offhandedly Amtrak as an example of a government organization that "is working" because it's relatively free from stifling regulation. Didn't know he knew it existed..... DIDN'T FULLY UNDERSTAND why San Francisco is presently so down on BART until Paul Rayton picked up an Oakland Chamber of Commerce brochure that proclaims San Francisco's rival city as the "headquarters of BART" along with a BART system map that makes it look as if everything to be seen on the system is located in Oakland. After all, there's Berkeley too..... ROBERT C. MOOT, Ass't Sec'y of Defense (Comptroller) for the past 4½ years, was named Amtrak's V.P.-Finance effective February 1.....

COOKING UP A BATCH OF RAIL TRAVEL FUN

The train enthusiast who is unfamiliar with Cooks Continental Timetable has a treat in store for him. This monthly publication describes itself modestly as "A simple Guide to the principal Rail Services of Europe, North Africa and the Near East, with Local Shipping Services in the North Sea, the Baltic and the Mediterranean." Anyone with any interest in trains at all should examine at least one copy, if only to become further impressed with the extensiveness of passenger train service in other civilized nations.

As an example, the December 1972 issue contains 472 paperbound pages chock full of schedules and maps. There is virtually no advertising, with a notable exception that Amtrak has for some time placed its own nationwide schedules in the Timetable--eight pages in December--with timetables drawn up in the style of Cooks, using the 24-hour clock system, and showing on the U.S. route map the table number where the schedule is found alongside each route. Amtrak does not, however, indicate both arrival and departure times for each train at each stop as the Timetable does for Trans-Europe Express and International Express trains.

A two-page editorial notes additions and alterations from the previous month's edition. For example, one item: "The section on China, which was temporarily omitted from the timetable last winter to provide space for the new Turkey-Iran rail link, has been reinstated in response to the many requests received from subscribers." There is a list of principal summer service changes for 1973 (these run from June 3 to Sept. 29 on the Continent), and even a note of forthcoming Amtrak Northeast Corridor changes. (Incidentally, Amtrak's section includes even Rio Grande and Southern Railway and specifically mentions the thru Boston-Los Angeles service.)

Flipping thru the publication, one notes the schedules of trains on the Trans-Siberian Railway. The daily train from Moscow to Vladivostok covers 5778 miles in Seven days and eight time zones. A note indicates that "Passengers travelling to Japan must stay overnight at Khabarovsk (eastbound) and continue by train 3/4." Several other trains use portions of the route, including two Moscow-Pekin services. Turning to the China section, one learns that the Pekin-Canton route is 1444 miles long and takes two days by train 15 of the Chinese National Railways. Traveling to Hong Kong, you continue 89 miles on one of three trains to Shamchun, where you must walk across the frontier bridge, and then may board a train of the Kowloon-Canton Railway bound for Kowloon and Hong Kong.

Page 56 is enough to make an American weep. It is a map of the car-sleeper (auto-carrying) train routes of Britain and Western Europe. The schedules follow in separate tables. A note informs one that "Plain breakfast is served without charge on all car-sleeper services except in Great Britain and Poland" and adds that in Britain passengers get free morning tea and biscuits.

There are tables of the named trains listed in the publication, showing the route of each, with a reference to the table number giving each train's schedule. The FLYING SCOTSMAN, LE MISTRAL, the NIGHT FERRY, the ORIENT EXPRESS, the BLUE TRAIN--all these and hundreds more are there at your fingertips, ready to provide many an hour of fun, dreaming and eyestrain.

Cooks Continental Timetable is published the first of each month in London, and single copies or yearly subscriptions are available to the U.S. and Canada at $3 a copy (about 1-month delivery time) or $36 per year; by airmail the corresponding prices are $6.25 and $72 (6-10 day delivery). Remittances should be sent to Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd., Publicity Dept. (Book Section), 45 Berkeley St., London W1A 1EB, England. Cook also has offices in major cities of North America.

SOUVENIR POSTCARDS OFFERED

Two new souvenir philatelic or railfan postcards have been prepared by Message Media and are available at $1 each, 3 for $2.50. Only a very few of each exist, so will be real rarities: (1) Card commemorating first run of the INTER-AMERICAN, Ft. Worth to Laredo, specially postmarked at Laredo Jan. 27, but printed as previously-announced service Chicago-Laredo to begin Jan. 20; (2) Card for opening day of BART Richmond line, postmarked Richmond, Calif. Jan. 29. Both types franked with interesting and appropriate stamps. Mix or match for quantities. Californians please add tax.

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